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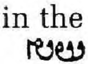
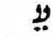
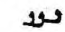
Armenian *sin* and *zgeṙ* (*zkeṙ*)

H.W. BAILEY
Cambridge

The Zoroastrian Bun-dahišn has survived in two recessions, shorter and longer; both are now known in facsimile editions. Two chapters, in the shorter Chapter 27 and in the longer Chapter 16, are botanical statements.

In classification by edibility, eight fruits are named in the longer, but only four in the shorter text. The English translation by E.W. West, SBE V, 1880, 88-105, was all that was available to B. Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, 1919, 192-4. One name was, and has recently been, mistaken in the oldest MS K 20, 120 v 5, the shorter text. The name, written , that is, **sičit*, 'zizyphus (jujube)' is in the longer text *slnčt* **sinčat* (with intrusive -l-). The *sičit* is without the -*n*- and has the ending -*it*- like the New Persian *sinȷ̌id*. The sign  stands for the fuller  **sy*-, but the double dot was neglected earlier, and the reading *spēt* adopted. The absence of -*n*- is notable also in Munȷ̌ānī *siȷ̌ia* and Yidgha *səzīyo* (see in my *Dictionary of Khotan Saka* (*DKS*), s.v. *śīṃje*).

For fruits edible outside only, the longer text has: (TD 2, 118, 13-15) *armāv šaft-ālūk zart-ālūk sinčat sinak kunār āluk sgēl apārīk* 'date, peach, apricot, jujube, sorbus, wild jujube, (lote) plum, medlar, others'.

Here *synk* and *sgyl* have hitherto been unrecognized. The *synk*, either **sinak* or **sēnak*, corresponds to the Armenian sin 'sorbus apple' in medical and botanical books, as noted by H. Hubschmann, *Armenische Grammatik* 1897, 276. With a suffix *-j* from Iranian *-ǰ*, older *-či-*, the Armenian has also *sinj*.

The word Iranian *saina-*, later *sēna-* is a colour name, attested so far in Iranian with meaning 'variegated, mottled', as in New Persian *sēnah bāz* 'mottled hawk', and Buddhist Sogdian *'ps'yn'k *apsēnaka-* 'mottled'. In addition there is the Aramaic loan-word *psynqa *pasēnaka-* as the king of birds, which may have meant the multi-coloured peacock.[1] Elsewhere this colour name is used for blue the Indo-European base *k̑ei-* with many derivatives. With the suffix *-nó-* Slavonic had *sinĭ*, Russian *sinij* 'blue', *sinica* 'the tomtit' *sineva* 'blueness'. From Iranian it was spread (from Scythia) to the Fino-Ugrians in the North, as in Finnish *sini, sininen* and Mordwin *sėń*. But still more it was spread widely from North Iranian to the Caucasian South by the Alans with many other Iranian words. Here the Veinakh languages show: Chechen *sen-* 'blue, green' (of grass and sky) in the verbal *sen-d-an* 'to make blue or green' and *sen-d-ala* 'to become blue or green'. The adjective was *sīni, sijna, sijnanig;* Ingush *sijna*, and Batsbi (tush) *sen-* in *sen-d-alar* 'to become blue', and adjective *seni, sein*.

The sorbus apple has berries of colours from white through to red, the mottled colour may here be invoked.

The second fruit name *sgyl *sgēl* 'medlar' is written with two of the sign , which has values *d*, g, *y*, less commonly also z and *b*. Two are at times combined to make a sign like the alif , which would permit a reading either *sāl* or *sār*.

The medlar is well-known in the Caspian region of North Iran.[2] Its New Persian name is *azgēl* (with variants *i-*, *s-*, *ž-*, *-k-*, and *-ī-*). There is also a local Caspian form, *syr *sēr*. From Parthian the Armenian has *zgeṙ* 'medlar' with many variants, with tree-name *zgeṙeni*.[3]

The *-ēl* of the Iranian sgēl can be compared to other words: *bēl* 'spade' (beside Georgian *bar-*i, Armenian *bah* and New Persian *bard*) and *tēl* 'thread, wire', on which some notes were published in the Henning Memorial Volume 1970, 30-32. The word *bēl* can be traced to **barθrya-* (the *-y-* causing umlaut of *-a-* to *-ē-*) and *tēl* be traced to **tarθrya-* beside New Persian *tyr *tēr* (or *tīr*) from **tarnya-* as also the Armenian *tʿeṙ*.

Of sgēl, *azgēl* 'medlar' the older form to explain the *-ē-* and the *-l* will be *zgar*θrya-*. For this a base zg*ar-* must be found. One zg*ar-* 'to be rounded' is well-known in Iranian Avestan zgərəsn*a-* 'round' from *zgr̥tsn*a-*, with the g*ar-* without z- in Zoroastrian Pahlavi g*yrt *girt*, Turfan Persian g*yrd *gird*, and New Persian g*ird* 'round' from *(z)gr̥t*a-*., but it seems unsuitable for sg*ēl*, since various fruits are round. A second *zgar-* 'to move fast' is also familiar in Iranian as Ossetic Digoron *zgorun* 'to run', Sogdian *zγ'rt*, Pashto *zγard* 'fast' (quoted in DKS 412), but useless here. A third base *zgar-* 'to burn, darken' could be accepted either from *gar-* 'to be hot, blaze' and so 'darken', or from *var-* 'to burn, darken' passed by way of a bye-form *gar-* to *z-gar-*.

This sense of 'dark' especially 'dark brown' would suit well as a colour name for the medlar with its dark brown exterior and particularly its dark brown pulp.

Note too that a similar name of 'dark brown' can be seen in Ossetic Digoron *mōgä*, Iron *mūgä* 'medlar' if it is traced to an older **maukā-* and associated with the Indo-European base (s)*meu-k-*, (or -*kh-*, or -*g-* or -*gh-*) used of the colour of smoke (Pokorny 971) attested in Slavonic Russian *smugl* 'dark brown'.

Color words to give names to fruits are familiar. Slavonic *sliva* 'plum' and Old High German *slēwa, slēha*, Old English *slāh* 'sloe' are both from the base *slei-* of dark blue colour. The word *vana-* 'blue' was used to make Khotan Saka *banāve* rendering Tibetan *ño-ti* 'pear' or 'plum' from the bluish or greenish colour of the exterior, with the *vana-* of Zoroastrian *vanafša* 'violet', Arabic-Persian *banafšaǰ, manafšaǰ*, Armenian *manoušak*, later *manišak*, joined also with the Armenian loan-word *vana-* 'crystal-coloured, blue' and Old English *wann* rendering Latin *caeruleus* 'sky-blue'. I have also seen an unpublished Sogdian word belonging to this group. Ossetic Digoron *äxsinc'ä*, Iron *äxsync*' 'plum' is from **axšaina-* 'blue' attested in Old Persian *axšaina-*, Greek transcript ἄξεινος, Zoroastrian Pahlavi *axšēn* 'blue', New Persian *xašēn* and Khotan Saka *āṣṣeiṇa-*. These examples support the proposal to see in Armenian *cirana-*, *cirani* 'apricot', a word for 'golden-coloured' from *kai-*: *čī-* 'to burn', as a fruit-tree from the Iranian or Armenian hilly country, whence it spread widely.[4]

The reconstructed form *zgarθrya-* at once calls attention to the Caucasian Kartvel languages. Georgian has *zγmart'l-i*, *zmart'l-i* 'medlar' with an intrusive -*m*-, with the usual love of complex consonant groups, whence the other Kartvel languages have developed further: Megrel *ckimunt'ur-i* (*c* = *ts*, *k* = *k*ʿ), *sxumu*(*n*)*t'ur-i* (*c* = *ts*ʿ, *x fricative*), *Zan* (Megrel, Laz) *csimunt'ur-i*, *cxemunt'ur-i*, *sk'ilimunt'r-i*, and the most developed Swan. *zunt*' (*zunt'w-*), and *žūnt'w* (*žūnt'u-*).[5]

Georgian *zγm-* occurs in two other Georgian words: *zγmurdl-i* 'pustule' and *zγmurt'l-i* 'fungus'. Here the Iranian *zgar-* 'to be rounded' would explain both these two round things, and the -*mu*- would arise from -*ma*- by the influence of the labial -*m*-.

The word *kunār* in this same passage elicits some short notice. The New Persian has *kunār, kunnār* 'wild jujube, lote', in Syriac *knra* **kunārā*, and the Greek of Athenaeus ϰόναρος, ϰόνναρος. It is cited in modern Armenian as *vayri k'ounar* 'wild jujube'.[6] J.A. Vullers, *Lexicum persicum*, has quoted the long description of the *kunār* from the Persian dictionary Burhān i Qāṭiʿ.

FOOTNOTES

[1] I. Gershevitch, *JRAS* 1954.126, quoting the Aramaic text edited by Lidzbarski, *SPAW* 1916.1213 ff.

[2] H. Sābetī (Thābitī), *Native and Exotic Trees of Iran*, 1966.224.

[3] Mekhitarist Dictionary; J̌axǰaxean's Dictionary; A.K. Bedevian, *Illustrated Polyglottic Dictionary of Plant Names*, 1936.496; H. Ačaṙyan, *Hayeren armatakan baṙaran*^{2} (1973) II.98 in which the earliest known use of zkeṙ is noted in Grigor Tatʿewacʿi. The Editor informs me that in the Armenian Galen dictionary, zgeṙ glosses Gk. μέσπιλον 'medlar.'

[4] *Annali, ION* I, 1959.124-125.

[5] G.A. Klimov, *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' kartvel'skix jazykov*, 1964.168; I. Kipšidze, *Grammatika mingrel'skogo (imerskago) jazyka*, 1944.372.

[6] C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon syriacum*, with the meaning 'lotus' and 'medlar'; A.K. Bedevian, *loc. cit.* 624; I Löw, *Aramaeische Pflanzennamen*, 1881.283.